



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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DPI delegation to study in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam

Wisconsin receives second Fulbright-Hays grant to study abroad

MADISON—The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction received a Fulbright-Hays grant to send 18 educators to Southeast Asia on a five-week study tour this summer to explore the culture and educational systems in three countries: Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.

State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster noted that this is the second time Wisconsin has successfully written a group study abroad project. Last summer, 17 educators joined a DPI delegation that visited Thailand and Laos, including the Wat Tham Krabok refugee settlement in Thailand, which is closing and sending about 2,000 Southeast Asian students to Wisconsin schools.

“Southeast Asian children are prominent members of the growing diversity in Wisconsin’s classrooms,” Burmaster said. “It is important that educators learn more about the richness of their heritage so they understand these young people and can integrate information about their history, language, and culture into the PK-12 and postsecondary curriculum to better serve all students.”

The \$64,900 grant will cover the cost of international air fare, in-country travel, lodging, and food for educators to study in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam between July 8 and Aug. 12. The department is soliciting applications to join the study tour from elementary and secondary educators, especially those who work with Southeast Asian students; English as a Second Language (ESL) and world language teachers; para-professionals and pre-service teachers who speak Hmong, Lao, or Thai; university-level educators, especially those who work in teacher education; and technical college educators, especially those who teach global studies or ESL.

During the first week of the study tour, participants will explore the culture, history, and geography of Bangkok and Isaan in northern Thailand. The group will then travel to Laos and Vietnam to investigate educational practices, language policy, and teacher training. The tour will include school visits and cultural immersion during festival time in Ubon Province.

(more)

The “Understanding and Maintaining Our Students’ Heritage of Language and Culture” project is funded through the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program of the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Those selected for the study tour will attend two seminars at UW-Milwaukee prior to departure and again once-a-month for four months after their return. UW-Milwaukee has a new certification program in the teaching of the Lao and Hmong languages.

Projects that result from the study tour are expected to include culturally-based curriculum development for social studies, linguistically-based projects for heritage speakers, or university-level curriculum for teacher training programs. Participants will share materials with colleagues through printed information and Internet web pages and through presentations at conferences and workshops.

“All children in Wisconsin need to have more experiences with diverse languages and cultures. The importance of Asia in economics, culture, and history make it vital that students know more about its geography, music, literature, and the daily life of contemporary Southeast Asian people,” Burmaster said. “Funding for this study tour will help our us develop training through teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities.”

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NOTE: Educators interested in applying for the “Understanding and Maintaining Our Students’ Heritage of Language and Culture” Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad should visit < <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/cal/doc/thailand2005.doc> > for additional information and links to the application form. Applications are due to the Department of Public Instruction on April 6.